
JAPAN MEDIA HIGHLIGHTS

Morning Alert - Monday, November 14, 2016

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HEADLINES

Morning news

NHK gave top play to a report that an earthquake with a magnitude of 7.8 hit Christchurch in New Zealand on Sunday evening, killing two people. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports on anti-Trump demonstrations held in the U.S. over the weekend. TV Asahi gave top play to a report that a car driven by an 83-year-old woman struck and killed two people. TBS led with a report on the new political school launched by Tokyo Governor Koike.

There were no papers this morning due to a press holiday.



POLITICS

GOJ looking for ways to establish diplomatic ties with Trump

Friday morning's Asahi reported that Prime Minister Abe called Donald Trump following his victory in the U.S. presidential election on Thursday and agreed to meet him in New York on Nov. 17 with the hope of reaffirming that the U.S.-Japan alliance will be firmly maintained. The paper said as the GOJ has no strong connections with President-elect Trump, it has to start from scratch in establishing diplomatic relations with him. The paper said that while senior MOFA officials were worried about the lack of personal connections with Trump, some senior staff members of the Kantei were relieved that Abe was the first of the leaders of the G7 nations to speak with Trump by phone. The paper said the TPP and Japan's financial contribution to the stationing of U.S. forces in Japan were not discussed during the telephone conversation and will probably be on the agenda for the meeting on Nov. 17, quoting a senior MOFA official as saying "it won't be easy for Mr. Trump to change course" on these issues. A senior member of the Kantei staff reportedly said: "Mr. Trump will have staff who are knowledgeable about policy. 'I don't think the talks will be chaotic. We won't allow that to happen.'" Friday morning's Nikkei carried a similar report, saying that since PM Abe got the impression from the phone conversation that Trump is interested in Abenomics, he is hoping to build relations with him by talking about cooperation in infrastructure investment and using economic issues as leverage.

LDP, Komeito scramble to build network with Trump

Friday morning's Nikkei reported that both the LDP and Komeito plan to send members to the U.S. as early as this month to deepen relations with people in the Trump camp. The ruling parties are hoping to build ties with Republicans who are close to the President-elect and his aides.

Komeito member says Trump is "typical good businessman"

Friday morning's Asahi reported that following the victory of Donald Trump in the presidential election, Komeito lawmaker Mitsunari Okamoto, who has worked with Trump in the past, told the paper that the President-elect is a "typical good businessman." According to the paper, Okamoto met Trump twice in around 2000 when he was working at Goldman Sachs. He reportedly said that "America first" has been Trump's philosophy for a long time and he only built hotels and office buildings in the U.S. even though other real estate developers generally build them around the world to disperse risk. "He was good at numbers, a good listener, and asked questions if he didn't understand," said Okamoto. "He was able to immediately understand the feasibility or risk of a project by looking at the numbers." Okamoto also said: "If we show him how much Japan is contributing to 'America first' in numbers, he will probably be flexible about changing his views."

Kishida, Inada hope to gain Trump's understanding of Japan's foreign and security policies

NHK reported on Sunday that Foreign Minister Kishida and Defense Minister Inada appeared live on its "Nichiyo Toron" debate program earlier in the day and said PM Abe hopes to build a relationship of trust with President-elect Trump when they meet on Nov. 17 and help him to understand Japan's foreign and security policies, including the importance of the U.S.-Japan alliance. "The Asia Pacific

region is the fastest-growing and most vibrant region in the international community. It serves the national interest of the U.S. to maintain its relations with the region,” said Kishida. “[The Nov. 17 meeting] will be an important venue to build a relationship of trust. It will also be a good opportunity to convey our basic position on foreign policy, including the importance of the bilateral alliance.” The foreign minister also said the view that Article 5 of the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty applies to the Senkakus will be upheld by the next administration because it has been reaffirmed by the two nations many times. Inada said: “We need to explain Japan’s position. The deepening and strengthening of the alliance will benefit the U.S. as well, and Japan is shouldering a substantial burden. I hope to explain how we are strengthening Japan’s defense capability both in terms of quality and quantity.”

LDP lawmaker Kamei unable to meet with Trump in New York

Sunday morning’s Nikkei reported that former Finance Minister Kamei, who was visiting New York, gave up on meeting with President-elect Trump and returned to Japan on Saturday. Kamei was hoping to meet with the President-elect around Nov. 7-8.

SECURITY

Defense Secretary Carter to visit Japan in early December

Mainichi online reported on Sunday that GOJ officials disclosed that the governments of the U.S. and Japan are making arrangements for Secretary of Defense Carter to visit Japan in early December. The daily said the Secretary may visit around Dec. 4 or 5 to meet with his Japanese counterpart Inada and seek to conclude an agreement regarding the scope of the civilian component covered under the SOFA. The paper wrote that the two governments are hoping to sign the agreement by the end of this year, prior to the inauguration of the Trump administration, adding that the visit is apparently aimed at reaffirming U.S.-Japan cooperation and highlighting the importance of the USFJ. The daily also added that the two defense chiefs are likely to discuss the Northern Training Area, which is expected to be returned to Japan by the end of this year, and reaffirm measures to reduce the base-hosting burden on Okinawa.

USFJ chief says U.S.-Japan alliance will remain the same

Friday morning’s Yomiuri reported on p. 2 that USFJ Commander Lt. Gen. Martinez stated at a press conference on Thursday at MCAS Iwakuni, where bilateral training between the USFJ and the SDF was being conducted, that the U.S.-Japan alliance will remain the same no matter who the president is. The commander reportedly stressed that the alliance has been “built up over the last few decades” and that while he is not in a position to comment on what the next president will do, the USFJ will “remain as strong as they have ever been.” The paper added that SDF Joint Staff chief Kawano told reporters he is confident that the two nations share the same view on the importance of the alliance.

DM Inada comments on Trump

According to Saturday morning's Asahi, Defense Minister Inada spoke to reporters on Friday about Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election. "He said many things during the campaign, but I will not speculate on what kind of policies he will adopt after he becomes president," she said.

"However, since he did say many things during the campaign, I think this is a good opportunity to think about the three things I always talk about: protecting our country on our own, strengthening the U.S.-Japan alliance, and working closely with our neighbors. I think we are paying enough [for stationing the U.S. forces in Japan.] We are currently making substantial financial contributions."

DM Inada comments on "rush to the rescue" duties

On NHK's "Nichiyo Toron" debate program on Sunday, Defense Minister Inada talked about the "rush to the rescue" duties to be assigned to GSDF troops to be deployed to South Sudan. "There was no legal basis for them in the past, and there were situations in which SDF troops rescued people without any training," said Inada. "With such situations in mind, we must establish a legal basis, train troops, and allow them to protect people who can be protected." She also said: "From a humanitarian perspective, 'rush to the rescue' duties are meant to avoid leaving people who could be rescued to die. That is the purpose of our training. We must be fully aware of the significance and political responsibilities of assigning new duties to SDF troops."

Two U.S. service members in Okinawa arrested for DUI

Mainichi reported on Sunday morning that the Okinawa police separately arrested a U.S. service member belonging to the U.S. Army Garrison Torii Station and a U.S. Marine stationed at Camp Courtney on Friday night for driving under the influence of alcohol.

U.S. Marine arrested for alleged assault

Mainichi reported on Sunday that the Hiroshima Prefectural Police arrested on Saturday a U.S. Marine stationed at MCAS Iwakuni for allegedly slapping a Japanese man in the face earlier in the day. The suspect was reportedly intoxicated. The daily said the suspect is denying the charges.

ECONOMY

Effectuation of TPP becoming extremely unlikely

Sunday morning's Nikkei reported that following remarks by a senior USG official on Friday that obtaining congressional approval of the TPP under the Obama administration has become unlikely, the situation has become extremely difficult for the Abe administration, which is aiming for the swift effectuation of the trade agreement. The paper said as President-elect Trump has said he will withdraw the U.S. from the TPP, emerging nations have proposed putting the deal into force without the U.S. The daily said Prime Minister Abe is hoping to explain how the TPP will boost prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and bring economic benefits to the U.S. when he meets with Trump on Nov.

The daily said the GOJ and the ruling parties remain committed to passing the TPP-related bills during the current Diet session in the hope that Trump will change his mind. However, if Trump doesn't change his mind, the Abe administration will need to review its trade strategy, which is centered on the TPP. The paper also said it will be difficult for Japan to "establish trade rules for the next generation" ahead of China. The paper added that not only the TPP but also the TTIP, RCEP, and other multilateral free trade negotiations are at risk of coming to a standstill, saying that global trade liberalization is at a major crossroads. All other papers carried similar stories.

Lower House passes TPP-related bills

All papers reported on Friday that the TPP-related bills were passed by the Lower House on Thursday and sent to the Upper House. According to the paper, deliberations on the bills in the Upper House began on Friday and the bills are likely to be enacted by the Diet by the end of the current Diet session.

Finance Minister Aso expects close U.S.-Japan relations to be maintained under Trump

Friday morning's Nikkei reported that Finance Minister Aso expressed the view at an Upper House committee meeting on Thursday that the close economic relations between the U.S. and Japan will be maintained even under the Trump administration. "Although I cannot say much before the new team is formed, Japan enjoys the trust [of the U.S.] in Asia," said Aso. He also reportedly said he is hoping to gain Trump's understanding for Japan's foreign exchange policy as Trump has been criticizing Japan for allowing the yen to depreciate in order to expand exports.

ADB chief calls for continued U.S. involvement in Asia

Saturday morning's Asahi reported that Asian Development Bank (ADB) President Nakao delivered a speech in Tokyo on Friday and pointed out in relation to Donald Trump's victory in the presidential election that "Japan and Asia should continue to call for the U.S. to remain actively involved in trade and investment" in the region. Nakao reportedly said U.S. involvement has brought "stability, prosperity, and market-oriented growth" to Asia and stressed that "continued U.S. involvement will lead to regional stability and prosperity also benefit the U.S."

INTERNATIONAL

Japan, India sign nuclear power agreement

All Saturday morning papers reported on a meeting between Prime Minister Abe and visiting Indian Prime Minister Modi at the Kantei on Friday, after which the two leaders signed an agreement allowing Japan to export material and technology related to nuclear power plants to India. This is the first time for Japan to sign such an agreement with a non-NPT signatory. At a joint press conference, Abe stressed the significance of the deal by saying: "This will effectively require India, which has not signed the NPT, to participate in the international non-proliferation system." Modi reportedly said:

“The cooperation will support the fight against climate change.” Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Nogami reportedly explained that the cooperation will be suspended if India conducts a nuclear test.

GOJ sounds out China, ROK on trilateral summit on Dec. 19-20

Saturday morning's Yomiuri reported that diplomatic sources disclosed on Friday that the GOJ has sounded out the governments of China and South Korea on holding a trilateral summit on Dec. 19-20 in Japan. According to the paper, although the GOJ initially proposed holding the trilateral meeting in early December, China expressed reservations. The paper said PM Abe, Chinese Premier Li, and South Korean President Park are expected to attend, adding, however, that it is unknown whether the embattled ROK leader will be able to participate.

Japan, ROK to conclude GSOMIA soon

Saturday morning's Yomiuri front-paged a report from Seoul saying that South Korean defense ministry officials disclosed on Friday that the governments of Japan and South Korea will reach a final agreement on a general security of military information agreement (GSOMIA) as early as this week. The paper said that although the two governments are hoping to formally sign the deal by the end of this year, there is a possibility of strong opposition in South Korea if the agreement is pushed through, given the current conflict between the ruling and opposition parties over the scandal involving President Park.

Japan mulls providing 10 billion yen in financing for port in Russian Far East

Sunday morning's Asahi reported that the GOJ is considering providing about 10 billion yen in financing for upgrading a coal terminal at Vanino Port in the Russian Far East as part of Japan's economic cooperation with Russia. The paper said the GOJ is hoping to soften Russia's stance and make progress in the Northern Territories issue through the project. According to the daily, the two governments will hold a ministerial meeting in Moscow on Dec. 3 and continue to discuss the subject at APEC ministerial meetings in order to reach a broad agreement at the Japan-Russia summit slated for Dec. 15 in Yamaguchi.